

CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

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No. 54

30th January, 1960.

M.R.A. Manifesto to All Homes in the Northern Countries.

Last month the Moral Re-Armament movement issued a 32-pages manifesto called "Ideology and Co-Existence" to all homes in the Northern countries. The manifesto, printed in altogether 6,7 million copies, describes the present ideological battle between Communism and M.R.A. and appeals to people to take sides in this struggle. It deals particularly with the Communistic aim at world dominion and emphasizes that this aim is not lost out of sight even when consenting to peaceful co-existence. The manifesto, therefore, strongly warns against any kind of co-operation with the Communists, including cultural exchanges, as the Soviet Union exploits every possibility of infiltration. M.R.A. is described as being the true ideology of Democracy and the choice must be, not between war or co-existence, as maintained by Mr. Khrushchev, but between Communism or Moral Re-Armament. M.R.A. is identical with true Christianity and at the same time a catalyst uniting and releasing the enormous potential moral energy in all men of good will, irrespective of racial and spiritual backgrounds.

The manifesto has been widely commented on and discussed in the Northern Press, parts of the religious Press included, and in most cases the comments have been critical in varying degrees.

Several newspapers in Finland oppose the manifesto on the grounds that it may be detrimental to Finland's peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union. The "Hufvudstadsbladet" calls it an untruth to say that M.R.A. and Communism are the only ideologies in the spiritual struggle of our time and maintains that the manifesto in actual fact aims at a M.R.A. dictatorship instead of a Communistic one. The religious newspaper "Kotimaa" draws attention to the political trend in M.R.A. As a matter of principle, the paper writes, there would be no objection to the movement acting as a political Party in a free democratic country, but one must strongly oppose the movement's claim for monopoly on the Christian attitude by putting a sign of equation between itself and the Christian faith and in preaching that the future of mankind, of Christianity, and of the Church is bound up with the ideology represented by M.R.A. The Swedish diocesan paper "Församlingsbladet" points out that M.R.A. has left out the specifically Christian aspect of the Oxford Group Movement and objects to the assertion in the manifesto that Communism is the only enemy and that all Russian attempts at establishing contact with the West are intended as a means of achieving world revolution. "Moral Re-Armament

is a tragic example of what happens when an originally Christian movement loses its Christian contents and allows itself to be satisfied with working for earthly goals. Of course true Christianity fights also against godlessness and immorality, but, rather than confining these phenomena to one system only, it opposes them wherever they may be found, even within the sphere of the Church itself."

In Sweden the Rev. Einar Genitz deals with the views of the manifesto in an article in the "Svensk Veckotidning", published by the Mission Covenant Church, in which he gives an on the whole positive evaluation, although he questions the claim of M.R.A. to be the only ideological counterweight to Communism and denounces the idolization of individual people contained in the pamphlet.

The religious paper "Dagen" in Bergen, Norway, declares that M.R.A. must be discarded as a Christian movement, and the paper dissociates itself from the "uninhibited self-confidence" expressed in the manifesto while at the same time feeling uneasy about the "absolute slaughter" of the pamphlet in large sections of the Norwegian Press. "The Press, by and large, has failed to give an alternative to the 'supercilious ideology', thus being content with widening the ideological void already quite big enough". The religious paper in Oslo "Vårt Land" expresses approval of the manifesto. "It will help to open people's eyes and to make clear the views in the global war encompassing the nations to-day, a war in which nobody may remain neutral", the paper writes.

Two Evangelical Broadcasting Stations Close Down until Further Notice.

All broadcasting services having been nationalized by the Moroccan Government, the I.B.R.A. broadcasting station, run by the Pentecostal Movement in Sweden, and the "Norea" broadcasting service, supported by a Norwegian Lutheran Mission, have both had to discontinue their services from Tangier as from January 1st this year.

The I.B.R.A. station has been in operation since July 1955 and at the time of closing down it had come as far as broadcasting in no less than 24 languages over 3 short wave and 1 medium wave senders. The company hopes to begin again shortly over another station.

The "Norea" broadcasting company has decided to stop all broadcasts until the summer 1960 when they will be resumed from Monte Carlo. The transmitter here has a strength of 100kWh while the one in Tangier had only 10kWh.

DENMARK

"Position of the Church Stronger than Ever".

In a New Year's interview in the "Kristeligt Dagblad" the Primate of the Danish Church, Bishop H. Fuglsang-Damgaard, Copenhagen, expresses an optimistic view of the situation of the Church to-day. The Bishop said, among other things:

"I believe that the position of the Danish Lutheran National Church has never been stronger among our people than it is to-day. But this is true not only of our own Church. The Church as such has never proved its power more clearly than in our days. At least not since as far back as early Christianity. Just think of the onslaugts

of Nazism and Communism on the Christian Church. To wipe out Christianity was one of the main points of these ideologies. The Russian Church has given evidence of the true power of the Church, the power arising out of suffering and martyrdom. The very existence of a Church in Germany and Russia to-day is proving that the Church is invincible."

310 Danish Missionaries in Asia and Africa.

From statistics published by the Danish Missionary Society it appears that on January 1st, 1960, there were 310 Danish missionaries in active service, practically all of them in Asia and Africa. This is the same number as last year. The total budgets of the missionary societies in 1959 amounted to 6 million Danish crowns as against 5,8 million crowns in 1958.

13 New Churches Waiting to be Dedicated in 1960.

The "Kristeligt Dagblad" has gone into the matter of how many new churches were dedicated in Denmark in 1959 and how many may be expected to be completed in 1960 in the various dioceses. The investigation, which was confined to the Lutheran National Church, shows that while only 7 new churches were completed during 1959 there will probably be 13 this year, 7 of them in the Diocese of Copenhagen.

The "Bulbjerg Home" - a Private Ecumenical Enterprise.

At Bulbjerg, on the west coast of Jutland, a private person, Mr. Børge Poulsen, a continuation school teacher, has opened an international Christian meeting-place by the name of the "Bulbjerg Home". Participation in ecumenical youth work gave him the idea and the home will be open to the local population, to school camps, courses, and short rallies as well as serving as an international centre. Among the events of the past year may be mentioned exhibitions of paintings, of ecumenical work, of activities of international co-operation. There was also a week-end visit from participants in the ecumenical work camp in Denmark last summer.

Cutting Down Religious Instruction in Schools?

The Curriculum Committee, set up by the Ministry of Education to draw up new normative time-tables for the public schools, has published a temporary outline according to which the number of classes in religion will be reduced by 25% in the case of the first 8 school years. The aim of the reduction is to obtain more room for other subjects. During the first 2 years as well as in the 7th and 8th years there will be only one weekly class as against the present two.

Many Church groups have protested against the temporary curriculum, among them the Association of Teachers in Religion, the Association of Christian Listeners, and also the newspaper "Kristeligt Dagblad". The matter has been discussed in Parliament. Here the Minister of Education, Mr. Jørgen Jørgensen, said that these new time-tables are not intended to be compulsory, but only to serve as a guide, and that he, personally, could not see that the position of the subject, on the whole, had been weakened in as much as the "Praeliminaerskoler" (a certain kind of Danish secondary schools stressing the teaching of languages) at which the curriculum did not include Religious Instruction, have now been abolished and substituted by the "Realskoler" (another kind of secondary schools, giving more importance

to science and practical subjects) which have 2 hours of Religious Instruction weekly for 3 years.

One of the protests reads as follows: "A reduction of the number of hours of Religious Instruction means another step, if not the most dangerous one, in the direction of the secularization of our people. For this reason we, and a large section of our people, must take a most serious view of the matter."

Proposal for Collecting All Missionary Societies Under One Roof.

As an expression of the general desire for increased co-operation and fellowship in foreign mission work the participants in the December course for missionaries and other mission workers, arranged by the Danish Missionary Council, have suggested to the Missionary Council that all the offices of the various missionary societies should be collected in one building and that courses for the workers of all the missionary societies should be conducted every year, instead of every third year as at present.

First Married Roman-Catholic Priest in the Northern Countries.

A former Lutheran rector, Mr. Olav Rørdam Bonnevie, will shortly be ordained by the Roman-Catholic bishop in Denmark, Bishop Th. Suhr. Mr. Bonnevie will be the first married Roman-Catholic priest in the Northern countries. He converted to the Roman Catholic Church in 1945. Pope Pius XII was not willing to grant the dispensation needed for his ordination within the Roman Church, but this dispensation has now been issued by Pope John XXIII.

88-Years Old Missionary Lady Home from China?

The only Danish missionary still living in China, the 88-years old Miss Ellen Nielsen, will now once more be invited to return to Denmark if she so desires. Miss Nielsen is a Chinese citizen and therefore she has been allowed to remain in China. So far she has been able to manage by the help of her Chinese cook, but according to news reaching the Danish Missionary Society he has left her recently, and as Miss Nielsen's sight is very poor and she also in other ways has aged much, she has now been invited to come home, attended by a companion, if she wants to.

A similar offer was extended a few years ago, but was then declined in a friendly way by the old missionary.

Danish Satisfaction with Ecumenical Nature of the Lutheran World Federation Broadcasting Station.

The disclosure by the Lutheran World Federation of the agreement with the Near East Christian Council about sharing broadcasting hours at the radio station, which both organizations had applied for permission to establish has caused satisfaction in Denmark where the Danish Missionary Council and the "Kristeligt Dagblad" had advocated that the proposed Lutheran radio station should be an ecumenical undertaking - although it was not known at the time that negotiations were already then taking place between the Lutheran World Federation and the Near East Christian Council.

As may be remembered the Lutheran World Federation received the permission in December and thus owns the station, but half the programme hours will be put at the disposal of the Near East Christian Council. The broadcasts are expected to begin on Christmas Day 1961.

Bishops Against Compulsory Church Attendance by Candidates for Confirmation.

The church organization called "Kirkeligt Forbund" recently suggested that a rule for regular attendance at Sunday services by children receiving instruction for confirmation should be included in the regulations for such instruction and that a clergyman should be entitled to refuse to confirm a child whose attendance at church services has been unsatisfactory.

The proposal was discussed at the meeting of the Danish Bishops at the beginning of January, but none of them found it desirable to use compulsion in this connection. At the same time, however, the Bishops emphasized that it must be both natural and desirable for the candidates for confirmation to take regular part in the services and that, consequently, it would be reasonable for clergymen to encourage them to do so.

FINLAND

Baptist Member of Parliament in Favour of Complete Disarmament.

During the Budget debate the Baptist minister, Rev. Alvar Sundell, one of the representatives of the Swedish National Party in the Finnish Parliament, recently advocated complete Finnish disarmament. He opposed the proposed expenditure of 23 thousand million Finnish marks for national defence on the grounds that the country could not afford it. Furthermore he referred to certain military experts who, even at such cost, are sceptical about the efficiency of the Finnish military power. According to the Peace Treaty Finland may have a maximum of 41,900 men under arms, a navy of 10,000 tons but no submarines, and 60 aircraft, none of which may be bombers. The most modern weapons are prohibited and since weapons may not be procured for more men than stipulated a general mobilization is impossible.

The standpoint of Rev. A. Sundell is not the same as that of the Swedish National Party.

Demand for Censorship on Account of M.R.A. Manifesto.

Occasioned by the issue of the Moral Re-Armament manifesto "Ideology and Co-Existence" to all Finnish homes members of the Board of the "Finland-Soviet-Union Society" recently applied for an interview with Prime Minister Sukselainen in the course of which they expressed the hope that Government would take up for consideration "this publication so detrimental to our country and take steps to prevent further publications of this kind."

A large section of the Press, including papers which otherwise are strongly critical to the contents of the pamphlet, and especially the non-Socialist Press, dissociates itself from the demand for censorship contained in the appeal.

Discussion about the Theological Faculties.

Quite recently the line taken by the Theological Faculties at Helsinki (Helsingfors) and Turku (Åbo) has been discussed, the Swedish Faculty at Turku (Åbo) having been criticized by theologically conservative circles in the Swedish Diocese. Thus Mr. Albin Wickman, a Social Councillor, writes in the periodical "Människovänner"

that if the view expressed by a Turku (Åbo) theologian that "the recuperation of Christianity will hardly be achieved by a return to some sort of Biblical fundamentalism of the older type" is also the general opinion at Turku (Åbo) it should not surprise anybody if the old revivalist circles and the country parts adhering to a fundamentalistic view of the Bible have their misgivings about this Faculty which ought to be the one dearest to the hearts of the Swedish church-people. The article continues:

"When at the same time the so-called "Lund School" of Theology is defended for its critical attitude towards the revivalist conception of Christian piety, it becomes increasingly difficult to call the Swedish Theological Faculty our own - although our national hearts yearn to do so... It is our duty as older Christians, parents, and leaders to demand that the Faculties teaching our young people Christianity must unwaveringly build their faith on the firm foundation of the word of God and help to confirm the young in the faith of their childhood rather than tear down that which our fathers have built up in our hearts and in the congregation by all sorts of scientific and pseudo-scientific arguments and demonstrations."

In an open letter to Mr. Wickman Professor Rafael Gyllenborg replies that everyone of the Turku (Åbo) instructors in one way or the other are spiritually rooted in the revivalist movements and that they honestly try to preserve and further increase the religious heritage of our fathers. "But we do not act like revivalist preachers," the Professor writes, "and I do not believe that is our job, either." In this connection he points out that the students have their own minister who conducts regular church services and devotions for the under-graduates and that there are morning prayers in the lecture rooms daily. Finally he draws attention to the fact that three of the teachers at Helsinki (Helsingfors) belong to the "Lund School" whereas there is only one at Turku (Åbo).

Japan More Responsive to the Gospel.

On his return last month from a 4 months' journey to Japan the Rev. Toivo Rapeli, a Rural Dean, said that conditions have not changed appreciably since his visit to Japan 6 years ago. Wherever a change is noticeable it is to the better, from a Christian point of view. Although a revival of Shintoism is taking place at the moment, the soil is, nevertheless, more favourable to Christianity. As for the Lutheran Church in Japan Rev. T. Rapeli says that it is more single-minded than before in its work.

Mouth- and Hoof Disease Prevented Christmas Services.

On the recommendation of police and veterinary authorities the Christmas services in a number of parishes were cancelled owing to an outbreak of mouth- and hoof disease in Eastern Finland, and in some places the inhabitants of certain villages had to stay at home in order that the other parish members might be able to go to church.

On this account the Bishops Simojoki, Alaja and Rosenvist, in whose dioceses the disease was found, issued a joint Christmas message to all those who were prevented from attending Christmas services in their own churches. They were requested to listen to the radio services instead and to gather in the homes for common devotions.

Radio Play about Joseph and His Brothers.

In four January Saturday night youth programmes the Finnish radio has broadcast a radio play about "Joseph and His Brothers", written by the Finland-Swedish clergymen, Rev. Rolf Karlsson, who is attached to the broadcasting corporation and has previously written a radio play about Luther. Several actors from the Swedish Theatre in Helsinki (Helsingfors) took part in the programmes.

Novel about Jesus by Mika Waltari.

The Nobel Prize winner Mika Waltari has published a novel about the life of Jesus called "The Secret of the Kingdom". Church circles have received the book with appreciation whereas literary circles are somewhat more reserved.

In his earlier book "Felix the Happy", Mika Waltari also touched on religious problems, such as modern street mission and its methods, the religious conflicts of people with a university training, healthy and unhealthy piety, and true churchmanship.

News in Brief:

- Two, from a churchman's point of view, unusual plays have been presented recently in Helsinki (Helsingfors), viz. "Dream Play" by Strindberg and "The Last Temptations" by Lauri Kokkonen. The latter describes the life of the great religious leader Paavo Ruotsalainen.
- Last month the third and last volume of the "Selected Works of Luther" was published. Chief Editor of the Selections is Professor Lennart Pinomaa.
- The Pentecostal Movement has become a member of Finland's Swedish Free Church Council which also includes the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church, and the Mission Covenant Church.
- At his own request the head of the Laymen's Institute at Järvenpää, Dr. Aarne Siirala, D.D., will resign his post as from September 1st, 1960.
- According to Professor Osmo Tiililä, writing in the periodical "Theologia", there are 22 Roman-Catholic priests in Finland to minister to the 2,100 members of the Roman-Catholic Church there.

ICELAND

Free Church Anniversary in Reykjavik.

The Evangelical-Lutheran Free Church congregation in Reykjavik has celebrated its 60 years' anniversary. The church of the congregation, built in 1904 and later extended several times, can seat 1,100 people and is bigger than any other church or assembly hall on Iceland. The congregation now has 7,500 members.

NORWAY

Church Denounces Anti-Semitic Demonstrations.

As in other countries there were anti-Semitic demonstrations in Norway around New Year, although on a rather modest scale. This has caused all the Bishops in the Lutheran National Church and the leaders of the most important voluntary organizations to issue the following statement:

"We, the undersigned Bishops in the Norwegian Lutheran National Church and leaders of several voluntary organizations, express our deep regret and disquietude with regard to the recent anti-Semitic demonstrations in several places in the world and also here in our own country. The Christian Church must strongly emphasize the respect and freedom to which every human being is entitled and must regard all cases of violence and spitefulness as blemishes on a Christian civilization. Bearing in mind the ghastly crimes against the Jews which a few years ago shocked the world, the present happenings must be considered most serious and dangerous. Everything possible must be done to bring these demonstrations to a halt and to eradicate these tendencies."

Bishop Smemo on Mission and Ecumenicity.

In a New Year's interview in the Christian daily paper in Oslo "Vårt Land" Bishop Johannes Smemo, Oslo, said about the much discussed subject of church mission as compared to private missionary enterprises:

"We must find the practical solution to this question on the basis of the present historical situation. Our official Norwegian Church as such has never been engaged in foreign missions. As a result of the spiritual situation the call to mission work came to us through the voluntary religious revivalist movements. We should never have had such an active missionary spirit in Norway as we have if the thought had come to us through the official church. Therefore it is a heritage which we must be careful not to give up or too much tamper with."

About the ecumenical movement which has been strongly criticized from several quarters, the Bishop said:

"I quite understand the caution advocated with regard to the ecumenical movement. It is a fact that it contains certain elements which, if they come into prominence, would not be desirable or helpful from a Lutheran point of view. The movement counts among its members people who want to aim straight and quickly at church amalgamations. But this is not the official attitude of the World Council of Churches. It is unfair to the Council to pick out some of the most extreme tendencies and describe them as being representative of the general attitude. The real intention is not at all to unite everybody in one church organization, but to bring the various Churches into a true spiritual and practical contact with each other. And it is not only right, but also the duty of the Norwegian Church to join in these efforts."

Bible Translation with or without Dogmatic Foot-Notes?

The "Young People's Translation" of the New Testament, published by the Norwegian Bible Society, which has proved something of a best-seller was rather criticized recently on account of the dogmatic nature of some of the foot-notes. Dr. Carl Fr. Wisløff, Dean of the Practical Seminary of the Free Theological Faculty in Oslo, criticized this in an article in which he maintained that a Bible edition ought to be completely void of confessional-dogmatic additions, and this view is supported by several others. Replying to the criticisms Professor Sverre Aalen maintained that the foot-notes are justified.

In a leader the religious newspaper in Oslo, "Vårt Land" calls Professor Aalen and his adherents "more Lutheran than Luther himself" and advocates that in the future as hitherto Bible texts should be published without foot-notes of a dogmatic nature.

Renewed Debate on the Norwegian Missionary Council and Integration.

In an article in the "Norsk Missionstidskrift" the head of the Egede Institute in Oslo, Dr. O.G. Myklebust, Senior Lecturer, requests the Norwegian Missionary Council to take up for renewed consideration its attitude to an integration between the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council. As may be remembered the Norwegian Missionary Council voted against an integration, but Dr. Myklebust does not find the arguments for it sufficiently weighty.

The Dean of the Practical Seminary of the Free Theological Faculty in Oslo, Dr. Carl Fr. Wisløff, in a subsequent article warns against any changes in the decision taken by the Missionary Council. He cannot accept the argument that many years' membership of the International Missionary Council should make it necessary to become a member of the World Council of Churches as both of them count liberal theologians among their members. The International Missionary Council will now probably be dissolved and the World Council of Churches cannot be approved of - even because of the church centralization desired by, among others, Bishop Newbigin.

In another article the Secretary General of the Norwegian Missionary Society, Dr. Fridtjov Birkeli, declares that the negative vote of the Norwegian Missionary Council must stand, and should new representations be made to the Missionary Council in 1962 they must be considered in the light of the principal standpoint of the Council. His own main reason for voting against an integration Dr. Birkeli says is "the conception of the Church which demands an integration and which maintains that foreign missions cannot be considered fully legitimated by the Church until they become connected with the World Council of Churches. But the World Council of Churches has not at all more of a Church mandate than the International Missionary Council. Rather on the contrary. The missionary societies are an expression of an ecclesiastical function which is evident, among other things, from the fact that they all establish churches on the mission field, even the non-ecclesiastical societies."

Dr. Birkeli comes to the conclusion that it may be necessary for the Norwegian Missionary Council to keep away from all international organizations if it wants to preserve its inner unity. But at the same time he adds that it would **not** be an ideal solution for the Norwegian mission fields. He, personally, feels that the co-operation with regard to foreign missions within the Lutheran World Federation will be of an evergrowing importance when an integration has actually taken place.

News in Brief:

Local branches of the Norwegian Church Academy have been opened in Telemark and Tønsberg. In both places a number of meetings dealing with the Church and cultural topics will be held during the months of spring.

In December the new Bishop of South Hålogaland, Bishop H.E. Wissøff, was consecrated in the Cathedral of Oslo. The ceremony, which was attended by King Olav, was the first bishop's consecration to be shown in the Norwegian TV.

Two Norwegian bishops will retire on account of age in 1960 and two in 1961: in 1960 Bishop Karl Marthinussen in Stavanger and Bishop Arne Fjellbu in Trondheim and in 1961 Bishop A. Wiig in North Hålogaland and Bishop Ragnvald Indrebø in Bergen.

SWEDEN

First Three Women to be Ordained.

In the spring of 1960 three women who have already the theological and practical competence will be ordained for the service as ministers in the Lutheran National Church of Sweden. This was announced by the Archbishop of Uppsala Dr. Gunnar Hultgren immediately after the bishops' Conference which was held in Stockholm from January 19th - 1st. The ordinations will take place simultaneously but be performed by three bishops in three different churches. The Archbishop will ordain Dr. Margit Sahlin in the Chapel of the St. Catherine's Foundation at Österskär, north of Stockholm, of which Dr. Sahlin is the leader, while the Bishop of Stockholm Dr. Helge Ljungberg will ordain Miss Elisabeth Djurle in the Cathedral of Stockholm, and the Bishop of Härnösand Dr. Ruben Josefson will ordain the deaconess Ingrid Persson in the Cathedral of Härnösand. In a message broadcast by the Swedish Radio the Archbishop said that these women had the legal right to be ordained and that the three bishops had been directed by the duty to ordain which belongs to their ministry when their religious conviction does not imply any obstacle. The new order which has opened the admission to holy orders for women is deepest limited by the intention to serve the calling of the Church which is to preach the Word of God in the people. The Archbishop declared that he had felt an urgent desire to express his solidarity with these women both in words and in deeds and continued:

"For all those at both sides who know what is at stake it is duty to show to the utmost the mutual understanding and respect which an honest Christian conviction deserves and outwards in solidarity maintain that here is a right that has to be respected. This, however, is not enough. Still more it is necessary for us at both sides not to lose sight of the central part of the work of the Church: the preaching of God's own Word. We must hear what it has to say to us personally; it also calls upon us for joint service. Is it possible that we would allow our division to weaken the joint action of our church for the preaching of the Word of God in our own country and in the world through mission, evangelization, diaconia and Christian social service? No, on the contrary it is my conviction that our common responsibility for the work of the Church will show us the way where we can and must go together."

The bishops, however, have taken different standpoints in the question of ordination. The Bishop of Västerås Dr. John Cullberg in an interview has announced that he had wanted a longer respite and does not intend to ordain any woman. The Bishop's opinion is that in the present situation it is not so important to get three ordained women that one should risk a deep division in the Church because of that.

The division, however, especially has found an expression in the document which the "Kyrklig Samling" (Church Fellowship based on Bible and Confession) under the leadership of the Bishop of Gothenburg Bo Giertz has prepared since the organization was created a year ago and now has published. The document contains advice how ministers and laymen who consider the ordination of women to be against the Will of God and the Instructions of Christ shall behave in the situation that has arisen. The document says that such ministers cannot assist at the ordination of women, and that both ministers and laymen should avoid to be present. Because a woman does not perform a commission of Christ when she administers holy orders a man minister who is loyal to the confession cannot perform his service as a minister together with her, and a minister should avoid taking part in any church work, legal or voluntary, where a woman is serving as a minister. The church people should wholly stay away from services, conducted by a woman minister, no children should be sent to preparation for confirmation given by a woman minister, she should not be asked for individual cure of souls or communion of the sick. She should not be requested to ministrant baptism, marriage or funeral services. Churchwarden, organist and verger should, if a woman minister is employed, refuse to do duty at the service which she conducts. No layman who is loyal to the confession should go to meetings or conferences in which a woman minister is co-operating.

Bishop Giertz has resigned as the chairman of the committee on congregational work of the Home Mission Board, as Dr. Margit Sahlin is one of the secretaries of the committee. The Bishop, however, also has expressed his joy that there are points in the Church where co-operation can continue without friction, and he remains a deputy member of the Home Mission Board. He says that the personal relations between the bishops is good. There is no poisoning in the relations between them, and they can continue to work together in the same good spirit as hitherto.

The Bishop of Skara Sven Danell who in the Church Assembly in 1957 and 1958 voted against the ordination of women has explained that he did so because he was uncertain with regard to the problem whether the ordination of women is against the Word of God. He still finds this problem much more complicated than many zealous supporters of each of the two standpoints think. The Bishop has directed an appeal to ministers and church people in his diocese to abstain from demonstrations against women who become ordained and against those who assist at the ordination. "Let us", Bishop Danell concludes, "more eagerly than before go to the sources of life of the Church and gain strength in God's grace. If we do so we can confidently leave the whole matter in the hands of God."

Pronouncements Against Anti-Semitism.

Many organizations in Sweden have pronounced against the anti-Semitism which has found expression in the last time. Especially a number of Church organizations have made such pronouncements, among them the Bishops' Conference of the Church of Sweden, the Society of Clergy of the Diocese of Stockholm, the Swedish Ecumenical Council and the Swedish Ecumenical Association. The pronouncement of the Bishops' Conference runs as follows:

"With sorrow and indignation at the anti-Semitic demonstrations which have found place simultaneously in different parts of the world we remind of the duty of the Church to maintain the consciousness of the guilt which Christendom has incurred through centuries towards the Jewish people, to fight against race discrimination and terror and to make living the Gospel of Christ's love to all men."

Social-Democratic Party Discards Demand for Abolishment of State Church.

The Programme Commission of the Social-Democratic Party, headed by Prime Minister Tage Erlander, has published its draft for a new Party programme. In this draft there is no demand, as in the present one, for the abolition of the State Church. The corresponding provision in the draft says that "the relation between State and Church should be regulated in accordance with the principle of religious freedom."

The draft will be discussed at the Social-Democratic Party Congress next summer.

In a leader the weekly paper of the Swedish Mission Covenant Church "Svensk Veckotidning" remarks that it is not easy to know how to interpret such an alteration. It is evident that the hostile feelings of the old Marxists towards religion which resulted in the demand for the abolition of the State Church are no longer in vogue.

But the paper believes that probably political tactics as much as an actual change of heart is the reason behind the revision of the programme. "Many people believe, as a matter of fact, that a Church controlled by the State is easier to discourage from showing challenging initiative, criticism of society, and opposition. The State, moreover, saves money on a Church which does a lot of work, as for instance the keeping of the national register, cheaper than would otherwise be possible, and at the same time the State is able to economize on funds for Church expansion." The paper adds, though, that these motives may possibly not be of decisive importance, but they have certainly facilitated the revision.

In connection with Social-Democratic Party programme revision the "Svensk Veckotidning" mentions the fact that the Conservative Students Association and the Youth Organization of the Liberal Party recently demanded a separation of State and Church and goes on to say: "Times certainly change." The paper prophesies that the next step will probably be for the Church itself to take over the discarded plank of the Social-Democratic programme: the abolition of the State Church! "So peculiarly may times change that what seemed at one time to be a threat to the existence of the Church may now become the condition for its survival", the paper writes.

Demand for Penalty on Clergyman for Refusing to Marry Divorcee.

The Swedish Parliamentary Commissioner for the Judiciary and the Civil Administration has decided to bring action against the Rev. Alf Härdelin, Öja, for misconduct in refusing to marry a couple, one of whom was a divorced person.

In Sweden, as in Finland, clergymen belonging to the Lutheran National Church are compelled by Law to marry anybody asking for it, including people who are divorced, provided only that the legal marriage papers are in order. At the time of passing the Act in question it was done with the support of a majority of the Church Assembly, but some find its rules incompatible with the New Testament teachings about the re-marriage of divorced people. Several times in the past 10 years the Church Assembly has appealed to Parliament to set up a committee which might draw up a proposal for dispensation from the duty to marry people, but has been turned away each time.

In 1951 a similar action was brought against a clergyman who was acquitted of penalty, but the Court ruled that he had acted erroneously by refusing to re-marry a divorcee.

Parliamentary Debate on Youth Delinquency and Religious Instruction.

Last month a major debate took place in both Houses of the Swedish Parliament on account of a Bill introduced by various Members for the extension of religious instruction in public schools with one more hour a week. The Bill referred to the increasing secularization and loosening of standards and the decreasing power of the homes to influence their young people in the direction of character improvement. The Bill was rejected in both Houses, but gave rise to a spirited debate in which some 30 Members took part and in the course of which several Members expressed their conviction of the great importance of religious instruction, even in the way of counteracting tendencies towards youth delinquency, while others felt that school children should not have a one-sided Christian education.

Study Circle on Home Ecumenicity.

The Ecumenical Association has set up a study circle in Stockholm to which all Christian communities have been asked to send representatives. The group will study home ecumenicity and try to encourage ecumenical relations. The main topics of discussion will be dogmatic matters.

Free Church Conference on "The Congregation and the Family".

At the end of last month the "Frikyrkliga Pastoralinstitutet" held a theological conference on the subject of "The Congregation and the Family". 55 representatives from 6 different Church communities took part in the conference. The discussions dealt particularly with the question: Should the religious function of the family and its solidarity with the congregation be demonstrated by the children in one way or the other becoming members of the congregation? Opinions differed and, of course, the matter of infant baptism was one of the main points of division.

The Free Church Joint Committee was requested to try to meet the need for Christian children's pedagogics.

News in Brief:

- The offertory taken on Boxing-Day by the Swedish Mission Covenant Church towards foreign mission amounted to considerably more than 2 million Swedish crowns.
- At the end of this month Commissioner Ragnar Ahlberg will take over the command of the Salvation Army in Sweden. He was born in Finland and has been head of the Salvation Army there for 7 years. For the past few years he has lived in Holland.
- A Swedish sewing club in the Nebo Church in Chicago, U.S.A., has decided to finance the erection of a mountain church in Mellätno in Lapland, North Sweden. The church is to be built like a Lapp hut and will be the third of its kind.

